

3-1-1971

Gyroscope for the general plan

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Recommended Citation

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The following paper was completed in March of 1971, and was used with revisions for a Background Paper for the 54th Annual Conference of the American Institute of Planners in San Francisco on Monday, October 25, 1971: "Toward a Work Program for an Advocate Planning Agency."

A GYROSCOPE FOR THE GENERAL PLAN

The long-range planning staff will deal in information, criticism and advice. Our audience will be those who influence or make decisions.

We take upon ourselves a special role with respect to that audience. The information, criticism, and advice we offer will be informed by a vision we have for the City of Cleveland and its people. This vision is utopian in that it is admittedly normative, arising from our own conceptions of the "good life" for people. It is not utopian in that it may point to a direction the City can choose and can follow, a direction that distinguishes among desirable and undesirable actions taken yesterday, and today, and to be taken tomorrow.

Establishing some direction for the City of Cleveland is, thus, a necessary first step in our efforts to inform, criticize, and advise decision-makers acting on behalf of Cleveland residents. With this direction, we shall know when we are proceeding in the right way; and measurements of our progress along that path toward our vision can conceivably be made. Without it, even measurements of movement are irrelevant for there is no assurance of progress or regress in that movement.

Our vision (in outline) is as follows:

- Individuals choose their own goals and means to pursue those goals.
- Societal values and conditions act as constraints upon individual selection and pursuit of goals.
- Societal values are questionable insofar as they unnecessarily restrict choice and to the extent that they are inconsistent with one another.
- Institutions are established to serve individual pursuit of goals. In the process institutions, themselves, establish goals--some of which must be self-serving to assure their survival.
- Institutional goals which are self-serving, however, must be clearly secondary and supportive of institutional goals furthering pursuit of individual goals.
- Societal values and conditions also act as constraints upon institutional selection and pursuit of goals. But, unlike individual selection and pursuit of goals, institutional selection and pursuit of goals affect societal values and conditions. Institutions are, therefore, the focus for changes in societal values and conditions.
- Both individuals and institutions pursue their respective goals through decision and action. Decisions to act must be made from among those choices of action which the individual or institution perceives. --Individuals are better off with more choices in any decision, for more choices increases the probability that a choice involving an improvement in his welfare (as he perceives such improvement) will now be available.
- Institutions serve individual goals most when they provide wider choices in decisions made by individuals.
- The primary goal of institutions must be to provide wider choices, partly through their own decisions and actions, partly through their affect on societal values and conditions.

—In a context of limited resources, first and priority attention should be given to the task of promoting wider choices for those individuals and groups who have few, if any, choices.

A BRIDGE OVER MUDDY WATERS

Given this goal as a direction for change, what policies should we, as a City, pursue in order to serve that goal?

—Income and power are important generators of choice. Policies dealing with changes in the level and distribution of income and power are, therefore, necessary guides in reaching our goal.

—But, any given level and distribution of income does not, automatically, lead to more choices in private and public goods and services. Prevailing political, social, and economic trends, for example, are toward a systematic narrowing of choice for all, but a very few. Policies dealing with these trends in the response of the private and public sectors are additional guides in reaching the goal of more choices for individuals who have few or none. These policies will widen choice for the majority as well as the minority.

—There are, thus, two (2) broad areas of policy:

- 1. Policies to promote changes in the level and distribution of income toward some more equitable allocation of the rewards of our productive system; and*
- 2. Policies to improve the choices in goods and services offered by the private and public sectors in response to any given level and distribution of income and power.*

—Both areas of policy must be included in an effective thrust toward the goal of promoting choices where few or none exist.

—More specific areas of policy under the general area of policies dealing with the level and distribution of income and power include:

- Private sector payments and transfers of income to individuals.*
- Public sector payments and transfers of income to individuals.*
- Public sector allocation of power to individuals.*
- Relationship between individual income and power.*
- Payments and transfers of income among individuals.*
- Transfers of power among individuals.*

—More specific areas of policy under the general area of policies to improve response of the private and public sectors include:

- Individual expenditures on private sector goods and services.*
- Individual payments to public sector institutions.*

- Response of the public sector to individual power.

—Each of these policy areas serves as an initial framework for a work program. The objective of each work program will be to devise alternative policies for the accomplishment of the goal before us. Priority in work programming will also be assigned in view of our goal. Thus, policy areas which clearly focus on individuals with few choices will be considered first.

THE PRIMROSE PATH FROM GOAL TO WORK PROGRAM

—In order to determine what these policy areas might be, consider the lack of choices confronting an individual who lacks income. Theoretically, he has a number of options for gaining income. He may become employed, he may acquire capital (and, thus, realize income from earnings on the investment of that capital), he may apply for public or private assistance in the form of "welfare" or charity, he may borrow or ask for money from his friends or family, or he may acquire income through some illegal activity (robbery, burglary, gambling, etc.).

—Suppose this individual cannot get a job, does not own nor can he possibly acquire capital, and is not eligible for public or private assistance. His choices remaining are not hopeful, nor does his exercise of either remaining choice contribute to our goal. Even though he was successful in borrowing or obtaining income from his friends or family, chances are good that this transfer of income will be from poor to poor, leaving his friend or family even worse off than they were. Further, though the transfer may be made, it is obviously made grudgingly and sets up a conflict among those who already suffer under conflicts sufficient to undermine their life (and society at large) in important ways. Clearly, reducing his options to that of committing crime leaves him with no real choice at all. In fact, this is the one choice we cannot permit. The possibility of obtaining income through illegal activity must be reduced if not removed altogether.

—The policy implications of this are clear. On the one hand, policies establishing an adequate income guarantee to all individuals based on need must be devised. At the same time, policies must be devised to reduce the effective income to be gained from illegal activity.

—A minimum, but adequate, income guarantee program would include policy determinations on such matters as eligibility, work incentive, and level of basic allowance or guarantee.

—Reducing the effective income of criminal activity would require policies as to:

- Possible changes in the definition of criminal activity—gambling can be a crime or a local industry.
- Ways of decreasing possible revenues from criminal activity, by increasing the responsibility of victims or by reducing the opportunities for criminal activity.
- Ways of increasing the probability of apprehension, either in fact, or as perceived by the criminal.

—Successful pursuit of these policies would provide a choice the individual did not enjoy before (eligibility for a minimum, but adequate, income guarantee) while rendering the choice of criminal activity less preferred.

—Most individuals who lack income would prefer employment as a means to income over public assistance, transfers from friends and family or illegal activity. Those who cannot choose employment as a means to income fall somewhere in the following outline of the reasons for unemployment or underemployment—in some cases the reason for an individual not even being in the labor force.

—In those cases where supply exists, demand does not, policies to promote choice in employment would include those designed to:

- Encourage economic development of city and region in specific categories of economic activity.
- Insure equal employment opportunity.
- Encourage re-assessment of work tasks and personnel requirements by public agencies, private firms, and unions in the area.
- Maintain the demand for labor through public service employment of those willing but out of work.
- Encourage migration to or from the area.

—In those cases where supply does not exist but demand does, policies would include those designed to:

- Improve the flow of information about job openings and the counseling of those searching for work.
- Improve the working conditions of those employed.
- Permit choice of residential accommodations in closer proximity to employment centers.
- Equip individuals with the special skills and talents that jobs with promise require.

—Throughout our discussion of policies above, we have dealt in detail only with those encompassed in the broad area of policy directed toward a change in the level and distribution of income toward a more equitable distribution to those with little income. In the event that the chosen combination of policies is in some way successful in improving the relative income position of the poor, we still have that important set of policies remaining to insure that the increase in income does, in fact, promote wider choices in goods and services from the private and public sectors.

—Would, for instance, a change in the distribution of income as a result of the policies above, promote wider choices for the poor in housing? Specifically, would individuals and families living in substandard homes now be able to choose standard housing at rents they can afford? Or will the costs of supplying and maintaining housing at local standards still place the unit out of their reach?

—For many families, the dilemma is clear. "Standard" housing in central City locations is costly. Rents to support the construction or rehabilitation of these units is then necessarily high. Incomes, from which rents must be paid, are low and burdened with other demands—food, clothing, transportation. The gap between the rents which must be paid and the rents which could be paid must be narrowed by policies to increase incomes of poor families and individuals (already discussed above) and policies to reduce the cost of "standard" units—in effect to improve the response of the private and public sectors in the provision of housing for low-income families. An obvious first step is the development of policies to adjust the local standards.

—Policies will also be required in those areas of cost which together promote the high cost of housing units: land, construction, financing and operating costs.

—If a "standard" home is to include important neighborhood service levels, policies will be necessary in the areas of:

- The level, quality and distribution of services (schools, recreation, safety, etc.) in the City.
- The choice of location in an area or municipality where services are "standard."

—Promoting choices in housing is only one area of concern in our consideration of the response of the private and public sector. Other areas would include certain private consumption goods as well as a host of public services including education, recreation, public safety, and sanitation.

—Further, the discussion so far has not directly concerned itself with either the distribution of power or the response of the public sector to this auxiliary form of command over goods and services.

—This paper is, admittedly, only a demonstration of the process the general planning staff is following to develop a direction for ourselves and the Planning Commission and to use that direction as a guide in the development of policies which will ultimately become the general plan for the City of Cleveland.

—This demonstration, I hope, makes clear how the challenge we have set before us differs from typical planning practice.

First, we have established a single, relatively specific goal; and this was established with reference to our vision of the way a society ought to be. It is, basically, a moral stance on our part, and places us in a clear advocate position in favor of those who have few, or no, choices.

Second, the connection between this goal and the policies of the general plan will be explicit and overriding. As a result, some traditional policies and programs of planning agencies may not appear in the Cleveland general plan. At the same time, many policies (and areas of concern) new to planning agencies will be in prominent positions.

SHORT MANUAL ON STYLE FOR BUREAUCRATIC GUERRILLAS

Certain obstacles (and opportunities) are inherent in this approach to planning. Our style of operation must recognize these:

1. To promote social change is to accept social conflict. We agree to submit all conflicts to those executive, legal and legislative tribunals for resolution and to accept the resolution which is forthcoming. At the same time we refuse to minimize or cloud those conflicts before decision-makers. Conflicts in interests and ideas are not to be avoided. They are to be sharpened and clarified so that those who must decide make clear choices based on more fundamental precepts. Conflicts in ideas are to be particularly nurtured, for out of these conflicts can come progress in our knowledge.

2. To cast our vision in more fundamental terms is to assure that our breadth of concern will eventually encompass all. Our limited resources will not permit a "comprehensive" analysis to match our framework for planning. We must admit that our eventual plan will not be comprehensive in the generic sense of that term. Still, each part we accomplish of the total effort required will at least be informed and conditioned by knowledge of its place in a broader scheme. Further, the more comprehensive framework provides the same perspective to others in their various capacities throughout the City. Their work will be on our behalf in that sense.

3. There can be no "best" way, for there can be no "best" goal. This or that policy or program might, in some limited sense, be the "best" way to serve some given goal. But the determination of a "best" goal will fail for lack of criteria. Selection from among alternative goals is the difficult task of political decision-makers. Their selection is not of the "best" goal, only their selection of an alternative. Our selection of a goal, and all subsequent policy design based on that selection, does not presume that decision makers will select that goal, too. It will assure, however, that that goal will always be in front of decision-makers as an alternative during times of decision.

4. A healthy skepticism will be of invaluable assistance in our efforts, toward our own actions and decisions as well as others. Our framework of analysis will give this skepticism great force and direction. In every case, in all decisions, there are only a few questions:

—What explicit (or, more likely, implicit) goal will a decision one way or the other serve in this matter?

—In what way does service to that goal affect service to our goal?

—In most cases these questions will not be easy to answer, but if our action (review, approval, etc.) is the one sought, the responsibility for answering the question is theirs, not ours.

5. Our goal springs directly from those egalitarian ideals which are rooted in the rhetoric of our history. To fix ourselves, with professional integrity and abilities, upon that goal is to become the conscience of our society. As such, we will be beaten back at every hard choice. To take as our measure of success the number and importance of changes made in institutions, or the things which "get done" is to invite frustration*. A more valid measure of our success would be those small, sometimes fleeting, changes in men's minds, those important (but invisible) succumbings by an individual to his own conscience, and the new dedication, new purpose of individuals to those ideals we hold but only haltingly strive for.